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SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ESTONIA AND LATVIA

Letter dated 23 April 1993 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement by President of the Russian Federation Boris N. Yeltsin of 23 April 1993 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 116 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Y. VORONTSOV

* A/48/50.

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ANNEX

Statement by the President of the Russian Federation of 23 April 1993

On 20 April 1993, the Supreme Council of the Latvian Republic began consideration of a draft decision "on the granting of temporary residence permits to persons whose presence in Latvia is connected with the temporary stationing of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the Latvian Republic".

This decision deprives a considerable part of the population of Latvia of the right to legal residence in the country. They will be given a year in order to leave Latvia. This is a continuation of the inhuman political policy of the Latvian authorities designed to exert pressure on Russian-speaking inhabitants in order to force them out of the country.

The decision may affect the fate of the tens of thousands of people who legally resided in the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic and were citizens of it. The present Latvian authorities arbitrarily deprived them of citizenship, violating the obligations that they had assumed under the United Nations Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and now intend to deprive this part of the population of the Republic also of the right to free choice of a place of residence, which is a basic human right. There is clearly an intention to revive the concept of "collective punishment", which has been repeatedly condemned in the twentieth century.

International law does not permit a State to take measures leading to a worsening of a situation in the field of human rights. In Latvia, the basis for ethnic cleansing is in fact being established.

It is clear what sort of blow such actions would deal to Russian-Latvian relations and the international image of Latvia.

The international community, the United Nations, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe and human rights organizations, whose attention we have already repeatedly drawn to the lack of legal protection for ethnic Russians in the Baltic countries, cannot avoid condemning the further blatant mass violations of human rights about to take place in Latvia.